

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Actors and Actresses to Abraham Lincoln, [November 1864]

A young man, named Oliver H. Wheeler, a member of the Theatrical Profession, is under sentence of death as a deserter from the United States Army.

The Theatrical Profession has furnished a very large number of its members to the Army, and so seldom is an actor guilty of any criminality, that we, the undersigned, Actors and Actresses, beg leave to offer the following extenuating circumstances in the case of Mr. Wheeler.

He was under age when he enlisted, he was ignorant of the grave responsibility he incurred, he is naturally a good natured, unreflecting, foolish boy, who belongs to an excellent family. If you can consistently change his punishment, You will confer a lasting obligation upon.¹

¹ Lincoln telegraphed General George H. Thomas on December 5 and ordered him to suspend the execution of Oliver Wheeler. See Henry B. Carrington to Lincoln, November 30, 1864 and *Collected Works*, VIII, 135-136.

[Fifty-three Signatures Follow]